

Technology Report: Ethics
Brett Murrey
EDLD 5311/ET8050

Technology continues to move through school districts and classrooms, educators are faced with a daunting challenge. The challenge before us involves teaching ethics, and how to implement ethics within our use of technology. Implementation for educators means understanding, teaching, and modeling the correct and correcting harmful uses of computers and other forms of technology. Merriam Weber defines ethics as “the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation” (www.merriam-webster.com). Educators must instill proper ethics for students who are learning how to use technology at a significant rate. Robert Kruger states, “Teachers cannot always depend on parents to instill cyber ethics” (Kruger, 2003). Teachers must be at the forefront of this issue. The importunacy of the classroom teacher to teach ethical use of technology needs to be understood by all. Pamela Mendels writes “Schools have been so absorbed in bringing technology to the classroom that ethics have often been neglected.” (Mendels, 2000) Our students are more advanced in their abilities to give and receive information than the adults they learn from on a daily basis. To obtain more information on a specific topic, find and download the latest music, or play their favorite online game, our students use their most reliable resource, the internet. Rarely thinking about the consequences of copying another individual’s work, downloading music without purchasing it, or how they interact with others on the internet.

When should we begin teaching our students the ethics that is needed for our technological world? Technology director Jerry Crystal states that “the middle school is the ideal place to focus on ethics because that is where kids begin to develop their awareness of ethical behavior” (Starr, 2003). Students should be taught about their ethic obligations from the first moment that they handle a computer. Teaching students the correct way to handle themselves in our technology rich environment would be more effective than teaching them after they have already learned incorrect ways at the hands of others outside of the classroom.

Classroom teachers, need to be aware of the ethical issues, and work to incorporate the teaching of ethical behavior within technology instruction. Robert Kruger explains that we need to “Teach by example, work cyber ethics into assignments and discussion, and seek cyber ethics resources” (Kruger, 2003). Teaching by example will take some time in the beginning; however, the payoff is worth the time spent. As educators, we must also inform and educate parents on cyber ethics as well. Teaching the students will have an impact for their experiences at school, for students to transition these lessons to real life, their parents must also instill the values in the students as well. As educators, we must model for our students and parents how to handle themselves in this cyber environment.

Resources

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